

THE DIVINE CALLING.

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In the discussion of this series of subjects, we must bear in mind that all the momentous acts described in Rom. 8: 29, 30, are distinctively and solely the operations of the divine will in the work of salvation, that they come from God, and that they represent his side of the covenant in the carrying out of a purpose definitely settled and determined upon, in respect to each individual concerned, before the foundation of the world. Eph. 1: 4. The argument rests upon the same basis as that in reference to predestination, namely, that God knew the end from the beginning, and that his foreknowledge is equivalent to his decrees, modified only by the independent action of the absolutely free will with which he has endowed his intelligent creatures, both angels and men. Lange says that divine prescience is something more than the prophet's knowledge of the future. With God, he says, "to know and to do are identical." The prescience of God is creative. There is, consequently between prescience and predestination the necessary relation of a general to a specific term.

While this is logically true, yet it is modified or balanced by other truths of equal weight and importance. The human will is inviolable. God himself will not evade it or coerce it. It is possible therefore for the will of a man or of an angel to defeat the wish and the purpose of God, (with God, wish and purpose are equivalent terms) in respect solely to themselves, but certainly not in respect to anything outside of themselves.

The bearing of these observations upon the divine calling is obvious. It may be stated in the form of questions: Is the divine calling limited or unlimited? Would God call those whom he knew beforehand would not respond to the calling? Is there such a thing as an ineffectual calling? Is the calling made effectual by our own acts, or solely by the will of God?

In reference to the first question we must admit that in a certain very important respect the divine calling is limited. The Gospel is the divinely appointed agent of the divine calling. But even since the middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles has been broken down, can it be said that the Gospel has been preached to every creature? Are there not even now hundreds of millions who have never heard it? Can it be said therefore that the divine calling has been extended to all? Have not whole nations been excluded from it? It is true that the great commission commands the

preaching of the Gospel to all nations, and to every creature, but as a matter of fact it has never been done. It will be done, for the command is equivalent to a prediction, but until it is fulfilled there must of necessity be vast multitudes unto whom the call has not come.

But the divine calling is limited in another very important respect. There is a difference in regard to its effect upon individuals. With some it is effectual, while with others it is ineffectual. The Calvinists in order to save their dogma of arbitrary election have drawn a theological distinction between the "external calling" and the "internal calling," making the first ineffectual, and the last effectual. But this view of the case is dishonoring to God in that it attributes to him the mockery of calling men whom, by his own predestination, he has arbitrarily excluded from the possibility of salvation. In the calvinistic view God determines the difference between the effectual and the ineffectual calling, or in other words he determines who shall have the "external" and who the "internal" call. In the equitable, or as we understand it, the scriptural view, there is but one divine call, which, while it may be geographically, or providentially limited, is not potentially limited, except by the will of the individual unto whom it comes.

It is perfectly consistent with this view that God should call those whom he knew beforehand would not respond to the calling. Since all to whom the call providentially comes may make it potential and effectual by accepting it, the responsibility of its rejection rests wholly with them, and God is clear. It is a very significant and instructive fact that all the great doctrines of grace are so stated as to awaken the most definite sense of personal responsibility. Without this they would be meaningless. Without the freedom of choice, and the responsibility which attends it, there would be no such thing as a moral or an immoral action. It might make a vast difference with us whether we received the divine calling or not, but nobody would be to blame for not receiving it, or having received it, for not being able to accept. There is such a thing as an ineffectual calling, but in every case it has been rendered ineffectual by a perverse will; therefore we are exhorted to give diligence to make our "calling and election sure," a care which would be entirely superfluous except upon the essential hypothesis of a vital cooperation between man and God.

The divine calling is the first phenomenon in conversion, and comes through the usual means of grace, the preaching of

the Word, and the influence or operation of the Holy Spirit. All who hear and understand the Word receive that call. All who obey it make the call effectual to their salvation, and put themselves in the line of God's purpose, leading on to justification and sanctification. The call is wider than the salvation because all who hear it do not obey it. "Many are called but few chosen." While a Paul could consecrate to it his learning and genius, an Apollis his eloquence, a Peter his zeal, and a John his love, while thousands of noble men and women have surrendered all, and laid down their lives for it, there are vast multitudes who prefer the pleasures of sin for a season, and that makes all the difference for the world that now is, and that which is to come.

THE SUBSTANCE OF THINGS HOPED FOR.

Lay your heart bare, and tell us what has come to that loved one whom you cannot wake from sleep. Why should there be an element of bitterness running through your sorrow? Over and above the pain of parting, is there not a sense of doubt as to the other life, and is it not that which makes your grief prick like a thorn? Would you feel the same if he had gone to Colorado, or to any region of the earth where communication by mail or telegraph is impossible? If not, what is the difference in your outlook, and what are the reasons for it?

A careful self-examination will probably show that you are tremulous with unconfessed uncertainty. If you had a sure and well-established faith, you would know that, so far as he is concerned, he is far better off where he is than he was when you kissed him good-night a week ago. Beneath all your weeping would be a feeling of gratitude that he has been promoted to higher responsibilities, and summoned to an environment which is incomparably better than any afforded by this lower life. He has solved the problem of death, has passed through the dark valley, and is on the sunny uplands of immortality. Would you call him back, if you could, to suffer still further the stings and arrows of outrageous fortune; or do you rather congratulate him on his arrival in heaven and on the sweet companionship of those not lost, but gone before.

—*New York Herald.*

So live with men as considering always that God sees thee; so pray to God as if every man heard thee. Do nothing which thou wouldst not have God see done. Desire nothing which may either wrong thy profession to ask or God's honor to grant.

—*Bishop Henshaw.*